



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE POSITION AND WORK OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE PHILIPPINES

BY THOMAS B. LAWLER, A.M.,
New York City.

On a historic August morning in the year 1519 the church of Santa Maria de la Victoria in Seville, witnessed a ceremony that was not only of surpassing interest, but was destined to be of epoch-making importance. On that day the corregidor of Seville presented to Ferdinand Magellan the royal standard, and administered to him and to his companions the oath of fealty and obedience to the crown of Spain. This was the beginning of the great expedition of Magellan, than which probably nothing greater stands in the history of human endeavor. At the very dawn of the authentic history of the Philippines, therefore, the Catholic Church appears as a supporter of Magellan's great enterprise, and all the members of the expedition, including its great captain-general Magellan himself, were adherents of that Church.

On Sunday, April 7, 1521, after a voyage of endless hardship and suffering, Magellan cast anchor where, to-day, stands the flourishing City of Cebu, and the red and yellow flag of Spain was unfurled over the fair archipelago that she was destined to rule for almost four hundred years. It is a question whether Spain at this time fully appreciated the discovery of Magellan, as twenty years elapsed before any steps were taken toward the colonization of these islands. The expedition of Villalobos in 1542 ended in disaster, and once more two decades rolled by before the leader appeared who was destined to establish the rule of Spain on a lasting foundation. In 1571 the hour had come, for in that year the great Legaspi began the conquest of Luzon and laid the foundation of the capital of the islands—the City of Manila.

With Legaspi in his great enterprise were four members of the Order of St. Augustine, intrepid followers of the rule of the great bishop of Hippo. They were under the direction of Father Andres

de Urdaneta. As Legaspi and Urdaneta sailed across the bay of Manila that May morning in 1571, they saw at the mouth of the Pasig a native settlement. This settlement stood on the site of the present great City of Manila. The strategic value of the place appealed to the keen military mind of Legaspi and he decided to make it the seat of Spanish rule in the Oriental world. None the less did it appeal to Father Urdaneta as a valuable pivotal point whence he could bear to the native tribes the message of the Prince of Peace, and the truths of the gospel.

To-day on the Luneta in Manila stands a beautiful statue in memory of this auspicious moment. Legaspi, the soldier, sword in hand, and by his side Urdaneta, the missionary, with the cross raised on high, look out over the City of Manila and over the beautiful bay ending at the foot of the distant Mariveles Mountains. Before them waves in the gentle tropic breeze the Stars and Stripes, the flag of a nation that at the hour of their landing at this spot did not have within its confines even one solitary permanent settlement. Let us pause for a moment at that scene three hundred and thirty-six years ago, as Legaspi and Urdaneta draw toward that shore where the Pasig pours its flood of waters into the great bay of Manila. The task before Urdaneta might well have appalled the strongest crusader. Throughout the land before him were Malay tribes, steeped in the grossest ideas of a savage religion, and it required indeed an optimistic spirit to believe that the Malay stock would be amenable to the refining influences of the Christian faith.

Across the narrow sea to the west lay the great empire of China, with its hundreds of millions of inhabitants, paying tribute at the shrines of Buddha and receiving with reverence the ethical teachings of Confucius, while at intervals this land poured out a horde of blood-thirsty pirates to darken and devastate with fire and sword the lands around them. To the north were the Japanese preparing under the domination of the great General Hidoyeshi to annex Korea—a plan, it is interesting to note, not successfully carried out until a recent hour. In religious matters the Japanese were following in the footsteps of Gautama, the Buddha. To the south, the lands were filled with savages, who revelled in every form of idolatrous superstition and dark fetichism. What

a picture was this that met the mind's eye of the brave Augustinian on that eventful day! Did he falter? Not for an instant! Without a moment's delay he began the work of implanting civilization and Christianity. He and his co-workers preached the gospel, erected churches and hospitals, taught the peoples, and established centers whence civilization and religion might go out to the native tribes.

This expedition of Magellan and the religious auspices under which it sailed were part of the great exploring, missionary and crusading movement of the sixteenth century. This movement under the epoch-making activity of Spain, planted the cross in the isles of the Caribbean; under the lead of Columbus, in the highlands of Mexico, at the seat of the Aztec confederacy, under the intrepid Cortes; in the heart of the Peruvian Cordilleras under Pizarro, and in the Philippines under Urdaneta and his fellow-workers. I believe I am maintaining a safe historical position when I assert that it was not until within the past two decades that full justice has been done to the heroic endeavors of the Spanish conquistadores and missionaries. The work, for instance, of Bandelier and Bourne marks the dawn of a fairer day in historical criticism. With them as with Aeneas of old there is no distinction between Trojan and Tyrian.

While the Augustinians turned to what we may term parochial work, other Orders arrived to assist in the process of civilizing and converting to Christianity the native tribes. In 1577 arrived the followers of the gentle St. Francis of Assisi; the sons of Loyola—the Society of the Jesuits—came in 1581; six years later, in 1587, the Dominicans arrived and opened schools and colleges. As early as 1620, the foundations were laid of the University of Santo Thomas. This event happened only thirteen years after the first permanent English settlement in America at Jamestown. It preceded Harvard by sixteen years, and it was rounding out its one hundred and twentieth year when Benjamin Franklin founded the great University of Pennsylvania. The Resoletos arrived in 1606, the Lazarists in 1862 and the Benedictines in 1895. From Spain, too, came many secular priests to aid the religious orders, and far and wide the missionaries spread the truths of the Christian dispensation to the east and west from the confines of northern Luzon to the borders of Mindanao in the south.

It is not, of course, my purpose to give a history of the Church in the Philippines. The work begun by Urdaneta in 1571 waxed and grew strong with the ages. There, on the under side of the world, removed by thousands of miles from the homeland, far from the highways of men or the paths of vessels, the Spanish civilization was spread abroad, the natives were rescued from savagery and were taught the arts of peace and the truths of the gospel. So thoroughly was this work carried out that when the curtain rolled, so to speak, from before the Philippines in the last decade of the nineteenth century, the world saw this archipelago rising the sole Christian land in a sea of Oriental paganism. China, as four hundred years before, was still Buddhistic, Japan in the pride of a strong national life was establishing far and wide its native Shinto religion; the East Indians were still the slaves of fetichism, and storied India was still held fast in the iron caste system of Hindooism. In the Philippines alone of all Oriental peoples rose the spire of Christian churches, and from her hills alone reechoed the sweet song of the vesper bell. Surely we are glad to pay our little tribute of praise to the leaders that wrought such well-nigh miraculous results.

I am now led to the second part of my subject—the work of the Church in our Oriental possessions. That the mind of the East seeks the supernatural is manifest to the student of mental thought. This craving for the supernatural appears in every eastern land. We see it in Japan, where, on every hillside, at the entrance to any grove, one notes the torii that points to the humble Shinto shrine in the cool, sequestered glad within; we see China dotted with Buddhistic temples with their heaven-aspiring gables or see the stately pagodas, rising far and wide on hill and plain. In the Philippines, the people quickly threw off their ancient fetichism and embraced the Catholic faith. This faith animated to a wonderful extent the life of the people. They built churches and chapels; they received with fervor and zeal her sacraments.

In considering the social side we see that the state of the people was well-nigh patriarchal. In these islands nature poured her treasures with lavish hand. The Filipino needed not to enter the strenuous paths, nor did he. He heeded little the surging currents of the rest of the world as they ebbed to and fro. Hesiod or

Theocritus or Vergil could well have found here a new inspiration for songs of rural felicity.

De Comyn, who is acknowledged to be a disinterested writer, in his work entitled "State of the Philippine Islands" (p. 216), wrote a century and a half ago: "Let us visit the Philippine Islands and with astonishment shall we there behold extended ranges, studded with temples and spacious convents, the Divine worship celebrated with pomp and splendor; regularity in the streets and even luxury in the houses and dress; schools of the first rudiments in the towns, and the inhabitants well versed in the art of writing. We shall see there causeways raised, bridges of good architecture built, and in short, all the measures of good government and police, in the greatest part of the country carried into effect; yet the whole is due to the exertions, apostolic labors and pure patriotism of the ministers of religion. Let us travel over the provinces, and we shall see towns of five, ten and twenty thousand Indians peacefully governed by one weak old man, who with his doors open at all hours, sleeps quiet and serene in his dwelling, without any other magic or any other guards than the love and respect with which he has known how to inspire his flock."

Such is the picture drawn a century and a half ago by one who lived there for years, studied the land and the peoples. This was the result after two hundred years of the advent to these people of the Church with her message of Christianity to lift up their lives and hearts and hopes to communion with the Infinite. Few pleasures or diversions entered the life of the lowly Filipino in his humble barrio or village, and the message of the Church was a veritable Godsend. Around the church centered the life of the people. Each child celebrated the day of his patron saint rather than his natal day; the titular feast of the village church was marked by the gathering of the people from far and near. Round the church booths were erected where a miniature fair was established. For nine days religious devotions led the people to the altar where they listened to the gospel and partook of the sacraments; at birth and at marriage, in sickness and in death, they sought in the Church consolation and support and regeneration, and they did not seek in vain. Not only in spiritual, but in temporal or social things did the clergy minister to their needs. They opened schools and

founded hospitals. They taught the natives the elements of carpentry, of bridge building, of weaving, of pottery, of wood-carving. They learned the native dialects and wrote grammars and dictionaries, and preached to the people in the native tongues. They introduced the culture of rice, developed the cultivation of coffee and indigo, and brought from the new world cocoa and sugar cane. In a just measure they introduced the small holdings of land, and it is probably due to them that the system of foreign land-holding corporations did not secure the fields and establish a peasant serfdom.

Such was the condition of the islands when the clouds of war rolled across the scene in 1898. At this time it is estimated that there were about six and one-half millions of Christians. To minister to their religious needs there were about sixteen hundred and fifty priests, including both the religious orders and secular priests. In other words, there was throughout the archipelago one priest to every four thousand people, showing how active must have been the life of the pastor to minister to a flock of such dimensions and covering so wide an area.

When the smoke of battle at last cleared in 1901, and we looked on the Philippines in their lovely setting in the tropic seas, it was indeed a picture of desolation that often presented itself. War had spread through the archipelago and had left in its train the horrors that ever mark that demon of destruction. Speaking as I am of the religious condition of the islands at this time, we see churches ruined and the clergy swept from the altars by the onward rush of war. Very many of the clergy were driven into the large centers and the population was without ministrations or guidance. The flag of Spain had been lowered and a new era was already at hand. Other fields soon called the members of the Orders, who, in large numbers, left the islands, where, from their young manhood, they had worked among the people. Scarcely three hundred remained, one-fifth of the earlier number. Certainly the position of the Church was such that its upbuilding was a task that called for heroic effort, and that effort was soon forthcoming. The four vacant episcopal sees were soon filled by American bishops and recently another diocese has been filled by the consecration of a Filipino bishop, the first native priest probably ever raised in the islands to the episcopacy. The Church is re-

established and peace reigns under the flag that means equal rights and justice to all.

As a factor in the social as well as the religious life of the Filipinos the Church, therefore, holds a unique position. From this social viewpoint one of her contributions to the civilization of the Filipinos is the work of preparing the people for the maintenance of an orderly, progressive, and just rule. Her influence and contact, so omnipresent in every step of daily life must develop respect for constituted authority, for the rights of life and property, for the sanctity of the home with the resultant uplifting of the social fabric. This uplifting makes for the amelioration of the condition of the lowly, for brotherly sympathy of rich with poor, of the upper with the lower strata of society, so to speak. It will be most important in preparing the Filipinos for whatever measure of self-government the broad and kindly judgment of the American people shall decree. We certainly need every aid to carry out our good purpose and none will be more vital as a social factor than the Catholic Church and her institutions.